

Ravalli County Sheriff's Office  
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Chris Hoffman, Sheriff

Stephen Holton, Undersheriff

## Press Release

On Sunday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 1:20 AM, Inmates in the West Block of the Ravalli County Detention Center began complaining about a bad smell emanating from the air vent in their housing area. Detention officers entered the area to investigate, and learned that several of the inmates were suffering from symptoms which included headache, nausea, and burning eyes.

The officers began looking for the cause of the odor, and began making arrangements to move the affected inmates.

Eventually, all of the West Block inmates were moved to the detention center library, and medical staff was called in to care for them.

Detention staff located the source of the odor, and identified the problem as a propane exhaust leak in a boiler. The boiler was shut down, and officers ventilated the facility with fresh air.

Northwest Energy was requested to walk through the facility to ensure that the carbon monoxide levels had gone down and that the facility was safe. Once this was done, inmates were moved back to their housing block, and medical staff continued to monitor their health.

Two detention officers and one inmate were treated and released at Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital. All had complained of dizziness, headache, and nausea. The inmate had fallen on his way to a rest room and struck his head on the floor. The inmate was transported to the hospital by ambulance.

Sheriff Chris Hoffman praised the efforts of the detention officers saying, "Had this team not acted as quickly and efficiently as they did, the outcome could have been tragic." Hoffman cited several recent instances of carbon monoxide poisonings around the country over the past few weeks which had resulted in fatalities.

The county's maintenance staff also responded to the emergency and is looking into the cause of the leak.